



May 3, 2021

Honorable Anastasia Williams
Chairwoman, House Committee on Labor
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H 5789 Temporary Caregiver Insurance

Dear Chairwoman Williams and members of the House Labor Committee:

On behalf of The Rhode Island Chapter of the National Organization for Women, we submit this testimony in support of H 5789, Expand Access to Paid Family Leave (TCI). While Rhode Island was one of the first states to enact a paid family leave program, we are no longer leaders in this critical line of support.

Rhode Island currently offers the shortest paid family leave in the United States, with 4 weeks of paid family leave, while other states are offering 8-12 weeks. Rhode Island also has the lowest wage replacement in the United States, providing only 60% of workers' regular pay when on leave. Moreover, other states have broader qualifications for who a worker can take leave for to provide care. Caregiving responsibilities disproportionately fall on women, which further drives economic disparities for women under Rhode Island's current paid family leave.

S436 would take several critical actions to protect Rhode Islanders. It would increase the number of paid leave weeks from 4 to 12, it would enable workers to take leave to provide care for grandparents and siblings, and increase the wage replacement from 60% to 90% for those earning minimum wage and 75% for those earning double the minimum wage. It would also enable gig workers and self-employed individuals to receive TCI benefits – this group in particular has been burdened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We urge you to pass H 5789. During this time, this legislation is more critical than ever as COVID-19 has placed a burden on more Rhode Islanders and their caregivers. During 2020, Rhode Islanders had an 18% increase in TCI use from 2019, which was largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The economic and health burden this pandemic has created will continue to negatively impact Rhode Islanders – this legislation provides a viable solution to help further protect Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for your time,

Alexandra Curtis
RI NOW Legislative Committee
on Economic Justice

Rhode Island National Organization for Women (RI NOW) is a membership-based advocacy organization with hundreds of members and supporters throughout the state of Rhode Island. We believe that anyone who identifies as a woman deserves equality and equity in political, social, and economic arenas.